

~~SECRET~~

21 March 1972

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Suggested Outline for Paper Responding to Secretary Laird's Request for Net Assessment of DRV/RVNAF Forces

1. We envisage a paper in two parts: (a) the main memorandum, about 20 pages in length, and (b) annexes giving all the facts and figures we can muster in the time allowed to us. (The deadline for the finished product is 10 April 1972.)
2. The main memorandum would include the following sections.
  - (a) Summary (two pages or so).
  - (b) Introductory statement explaining that the main question we are trying to answer is whether or not the RVNAF will be able to continue the war largely on its own. Indicate that we assume (1) no negotiated settlement and unabated NVN determination to continue the war, (2) a continuing basic stability of the present governments in both SVN and NVN, (3) no changes of the situation in Laos or Cambodia of such magnitude as to induce either SVN or NVN to quit the war, and (4) a continuation of outside aid to both SVN and NVN at roughly present levels. We also assume a continuing, though diminishing, U.S. air and naval air combat role.

- (c) Comparison of quantitative strengths as of 1 January 1972 and 1 January 1973 for RVNAF and DRV forces. This will get us into the old numbers game on both main and local forces, but at least we don't have to coordinate with anybody. In annex, we should back this up, if possible, with more detailed tables of enemy strength in and targetted against each MR of South Vietnam, compared with RVNAF strength in each MR plus JGS reserve. Should also have tables of NVA strengths targetted against Cambodia and Laos. Finally, there should be separate tables on VNAF and DRV Air Forces, and on North and South Vietnamese navies, if possible.
- (d) The External Aid Factor: Neither GVN nor DRV have the industrial base capable of providing support to their ~~military machines to wage the kind of war they are waging~~ military machines to wage the kind of war they are waging. We should discuss this common problem of both sides, then spell out as precisely as possible the degree of dependence of each side on outside aid.
- (e) Qualitative discussion of the national will, the leadership, morale, training, and equipment of the forces of both sides. In annex, we should include whatever tables can be worked up on comparative equipment, length of training, ratings of ARVN officers, desertion rates, etc. Might be useful to include a discussion of desertion as a problem for both ARVN and NVA.
- (f) Evaluation of RVNAF's ability, on the basis of the above factors, to carry on on its own, ~~after this year~~. Emphasizing that this is our best judgment, point out that a very big unknown is the future level of Soviet and Chinese aid to NVN. Then go on to discuss each of the questions on page 2 of General Pursley's memorandum, all of which are related to the level of Soviet and Chinese aid.
- (g) Conclusion (about a page)

*Logistics  
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